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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DILI 000150

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/MTS
USUN FOR RICHARD MCCURRY
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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ELECTION COUNT INCOMPLETE, BUT PREPARATIONS FOR RUNOFF
BEGIN

REF: DILI 148

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CLASSIFIED BY: Elizabeth S. Wharton, Political / Economic
Officer, U.S. Embassy, Dili, East Timor, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

11. (C) Summary: The National Election Commission (CNE) yesterday, April 12, began the national tabulation of votes for Monday's presidential election poll. According to IFES representatives working closely with the CNE on this process, there are a number of problems with the district tabulation, on which the current preliminary result information is based, that will need to be addressed through the national process and that still have the potential to alter the final outcome. These problems appear to be primarily attributable to insufficient training and human error rather than any widespread malfeasance. Nonetheless, several candidates continue to cry foul and have submitted complaints, and the candidates that appear to be excluded from the runoff may still formally dispute the results when they are posted two days from now. In the meantime, political positioning and alliance seeking in preparation for the runoff is already underway, with Prime Minister Jose Ramos-Horta in particular actively reaching out to opposition parties to join his cause. End summary.

12. (C) Following its April 11 announcement of the presidential election results compiled from the district level tabulations, the National Election Commission (CNE) yesterday, April 12, began the formal process of the national tabulation. IFES is working closely with the CNE to support this process and today described to us how it is proceeding, noting that overall the polling center and district level counting and tabulation process has been "somewhat spotty". According to IFES representatives, this is mostly attributable to shortfalls in the training of the election officials and staff involved, which

in turn can be explained by the combination of the newness of the process with the fact that the polling and counting regulations were promulgated very late in the game.

13. (C) The end effect is that much more depends on the CNE national tabulation process than was previously anticipated. Examples of the issues that CNE now must address include: correcting erroneous data on a large number of actas (the summary documents accompanying each ballot box) which were filled out incorrectly, with numbers simply not adding up; obtaining access to 79 actas from Ermera district which were incorrectly sealed inside the ballot boxes and now require the CNE to violate its own rules to access; including in the tally a number of uncounted boxes which have been discovered; and reviewing the large number of null and blank votes, currently accounting for around 8 percent of the total. (IFES notes that this percentage will certainly come down as a result of the CNE review process and that ideally the number of invalidated ballots should be in the range of 2 percent). Citing problems such as these, the CNE spokesperson at a press conference late today announced that it will be requesting a complete recount for four districts.

14. (C) CNE reports it has received a total of 39 complaints related to the campaign or vote and have resolved 12 (IFES reports it was expecting 200-300). Although Fretilin Secretary General Mari Alkatiri, speaking for the campaign of front-runner Francisco "Lu'olo" Guterres, and second place vote getter Ramos-Horta stated they have no plans to contest the outcome, both campaigns report they have submitted complaints regarding irregularities to the CNE. Fretilin spokesperson Filomeno Aleixio relayed to Emboff that he believes that the party has submitted about a dozen complaints and are continuing to collect information and evidence which would be used in case Fretilin

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decides to dispute the outcome. Ramos-Horta's campaign manager, Dionisio Babo Soares, described three campaign-period complaints they have submitted against Fretilin, all involving attacks on Ramos-Horta supporters. Fernando "Araujo" Lasama, president of the Democratic Party (PD), currently in third place, today relayed to Charge his view that the results have been marred by manipulation, and clearly held out the possibility that PD would dispute the results. He detailed inconsistencies evident in many of the district tallies, as well as significant differences between PD's own counts or expectations and some district results.

15. (C) Despite the many questions and shortfalls outstanding for the current count, discussions have already gotten underway in some quarters regarding political realignment in preparation for the runoff election. Sources in PD, the Social Democratic Party (PSD), and the Timorese Social Democrat Association (ASDT) report that many of their members are considering whether to support Ramos-Horta, although this remains a highly controversial issue at present. Ramos-Horta today invited the leaders of these and other parties to a lunch at his residence to try to bring them on board, during which he reportedly listened to their views and concerns and presented a number of compromises on key issues, in particular regarding the "petitioners" group (the nearly 600 soldiers dismissed from the armed forces last year after going on strike in protest of alleged discrimination) and policy toward dissident military leader Alfredo Reinado. It is not yet clear how successful such overtures will be. PD leadership in particular declined to attend and Lasama reported to us that he believes such discussions are not appropriate before the results are finalized.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: Post believes it is important to note the essentially provisional and incomplete nature of the currently available results. Taking into account the number of still uncounted ballots, multiple discrepancies in the district figures, and the likelihood that a large proportion of the ballots currently designated as null or blank will be revalidated, it is not out of the question that the CNE will produce a final tally with different results. Should the CNE's result confirm the current lineup, we expect some renewed expressions of discontent by the losers; however, a tally that displaces one of the current front-runners could be significantly more destabilizing. In the meantime, Ramos-Horta's initiative to get opposition parties onboard with his campaign, while admirably proactive, is arguably premature. Certainly it seems unlikely that PD will respond favorably so long as the outcome remains in possible flux. Although we are concerned by some of the early reflexes to go straight to rejection of the outcome, it appears these reactions may be initial emotional responses rather than enduring positions. Post will continue to encourage candidates to use established dispute mechanisms and respect the final outcome assuming the process ends with major counting errors corrected and disputes credibly resolved. End comment.
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